

Gender Equality Forum and Spectrum respond to recent events around LSE men's rugby

*The Gender Equality Forum (GEF) and **Spectrum** (LSE's LGBT+ staff forum) have released a joint statement in response to the sexist, homophobic, racist, and classist **leaflet recently dispersed** by the **now disbanded** LSE Men's Rugby Club to LSE Freshers. The statement is an important example of collective politics in action, and brought together input from around 70 members of the School to draw attention both to the incident itself and to some of the initial reactions to it, which failed to take account of the full scope of the problem. Since the release of the statement, the School has expanded its response and has committed to paying attention to the broader issues raised by this incident. We have published the joint statement from the Gender Equality Forum and Spectrum in full below.*

Members of the Gender Equality Forum (GEF) and Spectrum (The LSE's LGBT+ forum) are outraged but not surprised at the Men's Rugby Club handing out misogynous, homophobic, racist and classist leaflets in Freshers' week. We welcome the speedy decision of the LSESU to disband the Men's Rugby Club for the rest of the academic year and their commitment to a broader challenge to hate speech and everyday inequality at LSE. In addition we call upon the LSE to recognise the gravity of both the specific incident and the broader context within which it has arisen. We are clear that this event reflects a wider culture of inequality and elitism that needs to be transformed; any response that frames the incident as exceptional would be unacceptable.

We call on the School to provide a dynamic and proactive response that shows the School's commitment to equality for all its members. Staff, faculty, researchers and students want their anger at the leaflets' message to be taken seriously, and demand recognition of the pervasive issues of inequality that mar many people's experience at the LSE. We are concerned that LSE's response thus far seems to be focused on damage limitation rather than real interrogation of the broader issues, a concern underlined by a historic failure to show real leadership on the need for change. New and existing students, staff, researchers and faculty at the LSE have a right to expect the School to ensure a safe environment within which all of us can thrive (as promised in the Strategic Review).

The GEF and Spectrum expect:

- *Full information on the time frame of the School investigation of the incident, including details of who will be conducting it and the process of their appointment.
- *A full statement from the School concerning its commitment to addressing sexism, homophobia, racism and classism at all levels across the school.
- *A firm action plan to transform the LSE's elitist and hostile culture, and details of the process and extent of group consultation and open fora on these issues at the School.
- *A clear commitment to appropriate resourcing, monitoring and transparent reporting on the substantive outcomes of that plan, such that this does not remain a paper exercise.

LSE's recent failure to secure a Bronze Institutional Award under the ECU's Gender Equality Charter Mark, as well as our placement 314th out of 369 by Stonewall for our efforts to tackle discrimination and create an inclusive workplace for LGB employees, underlines many people's sense that the School's stated commitment to tackling inequality remains superficial. LSE has a strong Ethics Code to which it is obliged to adhere, and the failure to meet this commitment risks further damaging the School's national and global reputation.

Provided the above conditions are met, the GEF and Spectrum are willing to work with the DMT as part of our ongoing efforts to create a safer and more inclusive environment at LSE. We see the issues arising from this incident as a real opportunity for LSE to take a lead in addressing everyday and institutional inequality.

Gender Equality Forum

Spectrum

Other concerned School members

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